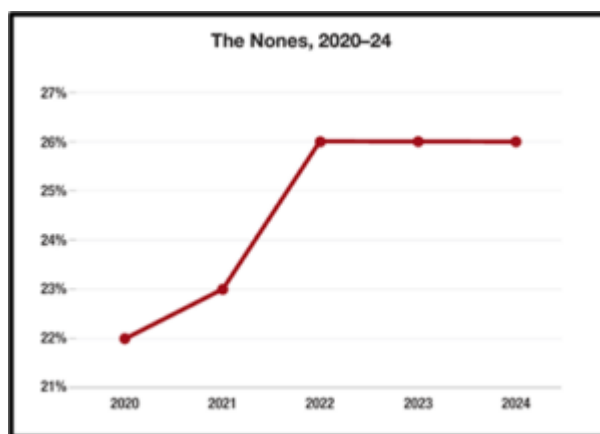


Percentage of ‘Nones’ flatlines for third consecutive year

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PHILADELPHIA (BP)—The percentage of U.S. adults not affiliated with a religion has flatlined at 26 percent since 2022 after decades of growth, the American Bible Society said in its latest release from the [2024 State of the Bible](#).

But the diverse group of 70 million Americans designated as “Nones,” 10 percent of whom say they’ve made a personal commitment to Jesus, are reachable by the church, said John Plake, American Bible Society chief innovation officer and State of the Bible editor in chief.



“One of the things that we think is really useful in ministering to people with no religious affiliation is just to recognize that they’re not against you,” Plake told Baptist Press. “And they’re not against the church, or God or the Bible. They’re in this place in between.

“It’s this liminal place in between for a lot of Americans, and that gives us hope that we can reach out to those people, and we can communicate the gospel clearly and biblically.”

Researchers aren’t sure why the Nones category grew steadily in the last quarter of the 20th century, spiked three percentage points from 2021 to 2022, and now appears to be stabilizing, Plake said. But he cited a trend of Americans becoming less religiously brand affiliated, which the American

Bible Society has documented since the late 1990s.

“Denominations in America are sort of less brand-aligned than they used to be,” he said. “When I was growing up ... the denominational brand was on the marker of the church. Today, that’s less popular, even if those churches are still affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, or the Assemblies of God, or the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), they may not actually say that on the sign or make a very big deal about it.

“So, often people are attending churches,” Plake said. “But they actually don’t know what kind of church they’re attending.”

Not all Nones are the same

The American Bible Society explored Nones in the 7th chapter of its latest State of the Bible, released Oct. 10th. The Bible society links to an audio interview with Ryan P. Burge, whose groundbreaking 2021 book “The Nones” traces public data from the General Social Survey back to 1972, when only 5 percent of U.S. adults said they were religiously unaffiliated.

“Dr. Ryan Burge has helped us understand that just because someone says they have no religious affiliation, that kind of doesn’t tell us enough about them,” Plake said. “They’re not all the same group of people.”

Along with the 10 percent of Nones who’ve accepted Jesus are 25 percent who are open or curious about Jesus or the Bible. Conversely, 64 percent of Nones are not curious about the Bible or Jesus, and 40 percent are hostile to the Bible.

“We’ve been concerned that this movement towards no religious affiliation would then become a further movement towards becoming atheist or people who are really opposed to the gospel,” Plake said. “And we’re not really seeing that.”

Rather, many Nones are still exploring their faith, and others will come to a place of exploration, researchers believe.

Churches can reach out to Nones by recognizing they're receptive to the gospel at key areas in their lives, including during periods of disruption or when they're struggling with anxiety or emotional needs.

"As a former pastor, I'm thinking, 'OK, how can we do church in a way that reaches out to our community,'" Plake said, "and welcomes people who might be struggling with these issues."

Among other characteristics of Nones:

- 7 percent read the Bible three to four times a year.
- 3 percent agree "the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it presents," compared to 38 percent of the general public.
- 8 percent say their religious faith is very important in their life today, compared to half of the general public.
- 40 percent believe the Bible was written to control or manipulate people.

State of the Bible is based on a nationally representative survey conducted for the American Bible Society by NORC at the University of Chicago, using the AmeriSpeak panel. Findings are based on 2,506 online interviews conducted in January 2024 with adults in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Additional chapters scheduled for release this year focus on loneliness and philanthropy.